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**Dietas más vegetales, más sostenibles. Evidencias científicas de las dietas plant-based en la salud global**Mercedes Sotos Prieto^{1,2,3,4,*}

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Unhealthy diets and other poor lifestyles are the major contributors to non-communicable diseases and deaths globally¹. About 11 million deaths a year are linked to poor diet around the globe². In the European Union alone, more than 650,000 deaths could have been prevented with better public health interventions that improve environmental, lifestyle or socioeconomic factors. In addition, within the context of the double burden of malnutrition due to both obesity and undernutrition as a consequence of low dietary quality, the world is facing the challenge of feeding a growing expected population of more than 10 billion by 2050³ with limited natural resources. In fact, the food system is one of the sectors that uses the most natural resources, occupies more than one-third of the world's surface, accounts for around 30% of greenhouse emissions - the most important contributor of

climate change, and pollutes the environment the most⁴. Of note, this has adverse consequences for human health and puts a lot of pressure on the planet.

In recognition of this, the EAT LANCET commission, consisting of 37 world-leading scientists in various disciplines, in 2019 outlined global targets on adopting healthy diets produced in sustainable ways. They defined a planetary health diet as an optimal caloric intake that consists largely of a diversity of plant-based foods, low amounts of animal source foods, unsaturated rather than saturated fats, and limited amounts of refined grains, highly processed foods, and added sugars.

In Spain, the AESAN (*Agencia Española de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutrición*) has recently released a sustainable dietary and physical activity recommendations for the Spanish population.

The adoption of a diet with these characteristics (EAT Lancet recommendations) could avoid 80,000 deaths annually and would decrease the greenhouse emissions by 70% and the use of natural resources between 25 and 55%. Considering that the current food-based dietary guidelines are not as effective in reducing the environmental impact compared to the adoption of the dietary recommendations developed by the EAT-Lancet Commission on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems, a shift toward this pattern is necessary in every country within its social, cultural, economic, ecological and environmental circumstances⁵.

Evidence from observational studies shows that indices that assess the proportion of plant-derived and animal-derived food consumed —instead of the mere exclusion of animal-derived food— capture the effect of consuming a more moderate plant-based dietary pattern⁶. This new approach showed that a pro-vegetarian pattern was associated with lower mortality⁶, however, it assumed —as all previous approaches on plant-based diets did— that all plant-derived foods are beneficial for health⁷; that is, considered refined grains (e. g., white bread) and potatoes (e. g., French fries), which are indeed plant-derived foods but may be associated with higher mortality, as equally healthy as vegetables or fruits, which are associated with lower mortality⁸. To solve this issue, the healthful Plant-based Diet Index (hPDI) and the unhealthful Plant-based Diet Index (uPDI) were proposed as a new method to represent a plant-based diet while considering the quality of the plant food (i. e., amount of healthy and less healthy plant foods)⁹. Our group has previously shown higher adherence to a hPDI diet, was associated with lower all-cause and CVD mortality in a nationally representative sample of Spanish adults and that adherence to healthful (but not an unhealthful) plant-based diet was associated with a lower risk of frailty both in a cohort of more than 80,000 north American nurses and Spanish older adults^{10,11}. In this talk, we will talk about the scientific evidence studying the association between PDI and health outcomes.

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conflicto de intereses

La autora expresa que no existen conflictos de interés al realizar el manuscrito.

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